

- Expand monitoring – both to measure pollutants in stormwater runoff and for the effectiveness of best management practices
- Comply with new reporting requirements – an annual report to Ecology will be due each year to include performance assessments as well as monitoring data.

Ecology will also expect that WSDOT apply new design requirements.

What are the funding needs for implementation of the WSDOT permit?

The supplemental 2008 transportation budget contains a \$3.2 million increase for WSDOT to begin implementation of the permit, expected to be issued in fall 2008. While it won’t be known until the permit is issued, we expect that based on requirements found in similar permits issued to local governments, total costs for implementation to be tens of millions of dollars more than WSDOT currently spends on stormwater management each biennium. WSDOT is now preparing a budget request for the 2009-11 biennium, and we’ll need the Legislature’s help to sort out future funding.







**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

WSDOT Stormwater Permit

May 2008

Doing our part for cleaner water

The Washington state departments of Transportation (WSDOT) and Ecology are working together to develop a stormwater permit that meets the requirements of the federal Clean Water Act and state water quality laws, and acknowledges the unique characteristics of the state’s transportation system. The new permit will allow WSDOT an opportunity for a more customized



Stormwater runoff from ferry holding lanes must be managed.

approach to stormwater management based on the type of transportation facility and its business operations.

Better managed stormwater will help reduce pollutants in our streams and rivers, contribute to salmon recovery, and reduce downstream flooding and erosion. Under the WSDOT-only permit, new stormwater regulations will expand monitoring and reporting requirements within the state’s urban areas. Cities, counties and other municipalities are addressing similar stormwater management through their general stormwater municipal permits. The fix won’t happen overnight, and it won’t be easy or cheap.

What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff is rain and snow melt that runs off surfaces such as rooftops, paved streets, highways, and parking lots. If left untreated, water running off these impervious surfaces may pick up pollutants such as oil, fertilizers, pesticides, soil, trash, and animal waste and carry them to rivers and streams.

WSDOT has an environmental obligation to manage stormwater

Paved surfaces, such as highways and parking lots, do not allow water to penetrate into the ground where it can be naturally filtered and treated before it enters streams or underground water supplies. Not only can stormwater

For every one inch of rain that falls on an acre of pavement, 27,000 gallons of water are produced.

runoff carry pollutants, but it can also erode soil and stream channels, producing muddy water that may suffocate fish and their egg nests. Federal and state regulations require that we meet clean water standards in locations where stormwater is collected, conveyed and discharged into waterways. These locations include:

- Highways
- Ferry terminal facilities
- Park and ride lots
- Maintenance shops and yards
- Rest areas

Statewide, WSDOT has over 7,000 miles of highway.



Stormwater facilities are included in new highway construction projects.



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

For more information:
WSDOT Environmental Services, Water Quality
Web page: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/>

NPDES 2007 Annual Report to Department of Ecology: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/A59F25BE-0765-446F-B56D-AFA068C70E26/0/2007StormwaterReport.pdf>

WSDOT Statewide Stormwater Permit Application, Department of Ecology Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/wsdot.html>

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Title VI Statement to Public: It is the Washington State Department of Transportation’s (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin and sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT’s Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For Title VI complaint forms and advice, please contact OEO’s Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7098.

A brief history on stormwater permitting

1980’s Congress amends the Clean Water Act and the Department of Ecology is delegated the authority to administer stormwater permits in Washington State. The major focus is on point-source pollution such as raw sewage and industrial discharges to surface waters.

1987 Congress reauthorizes the Clean Water Act to expand water quality preservation and clean up efforts to include stormwater discharges to surface waters.

1990 Phase I stormwater permits are created under the Clean Water Act. These permits use the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to address stormwater runoff. Phase I includes major urban areas (populations of 100,000 or greater) in King, Snohomish, Pierce and Clark counties.

1995 WSDOT’s stormwater drainage systems meet the definition of a municipal stormwater sewer system under the Clean Water Act. WSDOT is required by the Department of Ecology to get municipal water quality permits for state highways located within the Phase I permit areas.

1997 WSDOT prepares a Stormwater Management Plan that outlines the long-term strategy for protecting water quality and complying with state and federal clean water laws. We begin an annual report to Ecology that describes our progress and stormwater-related activities within the permit area.

1999 The Federal Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Phase II municipal stormwater regulations for population areas of at least 10,000. Phase II permits expands the Phase I program and covers 20 cities in eight counties in eastern Washington, and at least 80 cities in five counties in western Washington.

2005 WSDOT submits a permit application to include coverage for state highways and transportation facilities across the state. A WSDOT-only permit allows us to customize our stormwater management approach based on the type of transportation facility and our business operations.

2007 Department of Ecology reissues Phase I stormwater permits and issues Phase II stormwater permits in January.

2008 Proposed - Department of Ecology issues WSDOT permit.

When rest areas, ferry holding lots and park and ride lots are included, these collectively cover approximately 40,000 acres of paved surfaces. Managing the stormwater that comes from our transportation facilities helps fulfill our environmental stewardship commitment and regulatory permit requirements.

Why WSDOT has a municipal stormwater permit

As part of the Clean Water Act, Congress established the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES),



Many older highways will need to be upgraded to conform to new permit requirements

which requires entities that discharge stormwater into surface waters to have a “permit.” Under NPDES implementing regulations, state transportation drainage systems are considered municipal storm sewer systems. This means WSDOT must obtain permit coverage for stormwater discharges. In Washington, the Department of Ecology is the delegated authority to issue the permits.

Since 1995 WSDOT has had a stormwater permit for state highways and highway facilities within the largest municipalities in our state. Requirements of the permit are intended to protect human health and the environment. They are guideposts that allow us to manage stormwater to protect beneficial uses, such as swimming, drinking, recreation, water supply, etc.

Currently, WSDOT has permits that cover King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. WSDOT has also reported on stormwater-related activities in Clark County because Clark County was subsequently required to have permit coverage.

How WSDOT manages stormwater

WSDOT uses best management practices (BMPs) for controlling and managing stormwater. BMPs include:

- Structural features such as detention and infiltration ponds and relatively low-cost devices like wide grassy ditches, catch basins and culverts. On the other end of the spectrum are multi-million dollar stormwater collection facilities such as underground vaults and sand filters

- Maintenance operations to keep catch basins cleared and highways cleaned of sand, litter and debris that could make its way into streams and rivers.
- Vegetation management practices along highways and other transportation facilities to reduce the use of herbicides.
- Staff training on methods for controlling stormwater and preventing pollution, as well as proper use of herbicides.

Why WSDOT is asking for its own stormwater permit

In 2005, Ecology was preparing to re-issue the Phase I permit and issue new Phase II permits (affecting city and county urban areas of at least 10,000 in population not covered under Phase I). WSDOT was then faced with a decision whether to continue coverage under the Phase I and II general permits or apply for its own permit. WSDOT chose to apply for its own permit because it felt that a WSDOT-only permit would be a better fit for the highway system and the nature of its operations.

A WSDOT-only permit allows us to customize our stormwater management approach to better address the type of transportation facility and integrate with our business operations. A key difference between the WSDOT permit and the Phase I and II municipal stormwater permits is that it allows us to take care of stormwater while prioritizing the most environmentally vulnerable transportation corridors. It is not necessarily a cheaper way to do business but it allows us to take care of multiple priorities at the same time.

The new permit will require WSDOT to manage stormwater to a greater degree, over a larger geographic area

Most of Washington’s highway infrastructure was built before federal Clean Water Act requirements came into play. This means, while new highways and highway features are built to current standards and manage runoff, many of the older, existing highways will need to be upgraded to conform to new permit requirement and standards. WSDOT retrofits these older locations over time by building ponds or other treatment facilities. The new permit will require WSDOT to expand its current stormwater management program to cover most urban areas in the state. Both Ecology and WSDOT expect this permit to require a significant increase in resources and funding.

The permit will also require WSDOT to:

- Inventory and map its drainage systems
- Increase inspections and maintenance for thousands of stormwater features

WSDOT’s permit will be a better fit for the type of transportation facilities and the nature of its operations – park and ride lots, rest areas, and maintenance yards

